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Section V.

CONFERENCE ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND STATE

Draft Report on

THE CHURCH AND WAR

NOTE.

This draft is an appendix to the Draft Report on the Universal Church and the World of Nations, and should be read in connection with that document. It has been prepared by the Chairman of the Section in the light of such consultation as circumstances permitted with advisers in different countries. Its purpose is to provide a basis for discussion when the Section meets. It is not to be taken as representing the views of the Conference, and does not commit the Conference in any way. The Conference is free to adopt, amend or reject the draft in any way that it pleases. For this reason the draft is a confidential document. No public reference must be made to its contents or quotations made from it. There is no objection to those who write about the Conference indicating in a general way and in their own words the kind of questions that are likely to engage the attention of the Conference.

Universal Christian Council for Life and Work
41 Avenue Champel, Geneva

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THE CHURCH AND WAR

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The problem of the Christian attitude to war is of such complexity and acuteness that it must receive special treatment. It should, however, be remembered that our attitude to war is dependent on our conceptions of the State, of the nation and of international relationships, which are dealt with in other reports. The question of war can never be isolated from these other more general issues.

It is also necessary to remind ourselves that certain words which are bound to be used in a discussion on war bear a very different meaning according to the national background of the person who uses them. This is particularly true of the word pacifism, which may stand for such diverse attitudes as the love of peace and international justice in general, the denial of national values for the sake of a cosmopolitan internationalism, the refusal to participate in international war, or the rejection of the use of force in any form.

2. At all times Christians have had the duty, though they have not always recognized it, to decide upon their attitude to war. In our time, however, that duty has become inescapable. The exceptional gravity of the present international situation, as described in the Report on the Universal Church and the World of Nations, consists in the fact that we live perpetually on the brink of war, and that, humanly speaking, further wars seem inevitable, unless very fundamental changes take place in international relations.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that participation in modern war implies moral issues which are different, both quantitatively and qualitatively, from those implied in wars in the past. Modern war means war, not merely between armies, but between whole populations. Moreover, it will surely mean destruction on such a gigantic scale that the world may not recover from it for decades or even centuries. Worse even than the destruction on the material plane would be the moral consequences, the organised hatred and " compulsory enmity," which it would surely entail to a degree which we can hardly imagine. The problem of our attitude to war has become the problem of our attitude to a catastrophic event " of eschatological dimensions."

3. In order to arrive at a Christian judgment concerning war, we have to distinguish between the various types of arguments which are advanced either for or against participation in war. There are elements in the widespread aversion from war with which we can sympathise deeply, but there are also elements in it which we must reject. In a similar way, the reaction against certain types of pacifism which has grown up in these last years is not wholly unjustified. As Christians, we reject both the attempts to base the case for war on a pagan glorification of violence, and the attempts to base the case against war on a denial of national values or on sentimental or material considerations. Our basis of judgment is the Divine revelation and the reality of the Universal Church (See Sections II and III of the Draft Report on the Church Universal and the World of Nations).

II. WAR AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

4. The problem of abolition of war is the problem of creation of international order. For war is nothing else but the logical outcome of international anarchy, and is inherent in our present system of relationships between sovereign states and nations. The outlawry of war, and the protest against war-preparations and war itself, are therefore of no avail unless they be accompanied by positive attempts to create an order of justice and equity between the nations.

5. Such an order comes into being not only through the organisation of an inclusive world-wide political institution such as the League of Nations, but also through the creation of good relationships, expressed in treaties and agreements between individual nations, when these relationships are not exclusive or based on common antagonism against other nations.

International order is not to be identified with the *status quo,* for it implies the attempt to arrive at an equitable adjustment to new situations. Lack of imagination and lack of insight into the dynamic character of history may jeopardise the emergence of international order no less than aggressive and imperialistic national policies.

6. At the present time we have theoretically a considerable amount of international order, for the number of treaties and agreements of a multilateral and bilateral character by which most nations are bound is far larger than it has ever been before. In practice, however, the international order, in so far as it exists at all, is of a most fragile character. The world is caught in a vicious circle, namely, that true order demands

the limitation of national sovereignty, and that the limitation of national sovereignty can be enforced only by an international order which carries authority. In these circumstances, the existing fragments of international order cannot be anything more than a *façade* hiding the real political struggle in which armed force is the decisive argument.

7. The Church cannot create international order; for that is the responsibility of the governments. It bears, however, a responsibility for the creation of the conditions without which international order is impossible. It is this positive attempt to lay the foundations of peace, rather than the merely negative attempt to abolish the use of force in international conflicts, which leads to effective action. In doing this, the Church remembers that the one sure foundation of peace is the life of a supra-national Christian Community, the members of which realise their responsibility toward and for each other. Where men accept the call to become sons of God, and recognise Christians of other nations as their brothers, there is hope that they will seek to establish orderly relations between their respective nations.

III. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WAR

8. While it is true that Christian decisions are always to be taken in view of concrete situations, and that therefore no Christian Church and no individual Christian can say with certainty what God will demand, until such a concrete situation arises, we dare not postpone the consideration of the problem of participation in war until war is actually upon us. For unless we try in times of peace to prepare ourselves for the decision to be taken by seeking to understand its implications, our decision will be of an arbitrary character, and follow the line of the least resistance. The terrific psychological pressure exerted by direct and indirect propaganda in days immediately preceding and following the outbreak of war makes it practically impossible to arrive at a clear Christian decision at that time, unless one is prepared for the emergency.

9. There are different opinions among Christians as to whether we have reason to hope that war may be ultimately overcome in this world. That question is important for our view of God's plan with the world; but the differences on this point need not necessarily hold us apart in deciding upon our attitude on the war issue. For both those who believe that war can be done away with and those who believe that wars will remain as long as human history lasts have to answer the question whether Christians can have a part in it.

(a) The Attitude of the Churches to War

10. There are, roughly speaking, three different standpoints with regard to participation in war, all three of which are represented among us.

The *first* of these is that it is the duty of the Church to teach that Christians should participate in every war in which their country is involved, and in which their country needs their services. This position is based on the conviction that government is an order of creation or of conservation, that is to say, an institution which derives its authority from God Himself, and which has therefore the right to claim obedience from its subjects in all matters which concern the common life of men. Some of those who hold this view would go no further than to state that the individual is not in a position to judge the actions of his government and has no right to disobey its decisions. Others would add that the function of the State is to secure freedom for a nation to fulfil its historical destiny, but that in doing so its interests may clash with those of other states. In many cases such a conflict of interests can be resolved by peaceful methods, but there are cases which demand that a historical decision be forced; and since such decisions are matters not merely of static right, but of vital realities, this cannot be done by the application of principles of law or arbitration, and must be effected by war. Such war is not the denial of justice, but the search for dynamic justice, and may therefore become a moral obligation for the State and for its subjects.

The *second* standpoint is that the Church should seek to bring its members to the decision not to take part in any war. Quite apart from the question whether the use of force is inevitable in the enforcement of law and order, modern war is such a complete denial of the Christian view of human relations, and so futile as a means to establish justice between the nations, that Christians should consider this issue as one in which they must be more obedient to God than to men. They should therefore refuse to have anything to do with military preparations or with war itself.

The *third* standpoint considers it the duty of the Church to teach that Christians should participate only in such wars as are justifiable on the basis of existing international law. This position is based on the conviction that the use of force by the state is inevitable in a sinful world, and becomes a moral duty when law and order are threatened. Thus wars against transgressors of international agreements and pacts are comparable with police measures, and Christians should have no hesitation in participating in them. But if the State

requires its citizens to participate in wars which cannot be justified in this manner, Christians should refuse to do so; for the State has no right to force its citizens to take part in sinful actions.

11. These various positions have all three their peculiar points of strength and of weakness. The strength of the first position lies in its realistic recognition of the fact that there is as yet no truly effective means of international adjustment which can replace war. The strength of the second lies in its recognition of the utter incongruity between war and the gospel of love. The strength of the third lies in its consistent thinking through of the notions of law and force. On the other hand, the weakness of the first position lies in its exaggerated emphasis on national sovereignty, and in the fact that it tends to stabilise the relations between the Kingdom of God and the world. The weakness of the second position lies in its inability to answer the question as to how anarchy is to be avoided unless law and order are upheld by force. And the weakness of the third position lies in its lack of clarity as to what constitutes a just international order at a time when each nation has its own interpretation of international justice.

12. Since these different positions represent no more than very relative attempts to answer one of the most baffling questions with which mankind is faced, and can all claim certain aspects of revealed truth in their favour, none of them can claim to represent *the only* Christian attitude. Both the participation in war and the refusal to participate in it are acts for which we must ask the forgiveness of God. In this whole matter we are faced with a conflict of duties which puts the Church as a whole, and every Christian individually, before the necessity of a painful choice, and which becomes a test case of the reality of our Christian fellowship.

13. In spite of these disagreements, there remains, however, this common Christian affirmation, which we wish to proclaim as emphatically as possible, that war is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in this world, and that we are called to combat this great evil with all our force. We therefore protest against the glorification of war, and affirm that when war comes, it is the task of the Church, not to intensify the hatred and misunderstanding between the warring nations, but rather to witness in word and action to the reality of the Kingdom of God which transcends the world of nations and which is announced and reflected by the Church of Christ in this world. In times of war the Church is to maintain and intensify œcumenical fellowship and to preach more clearly than ever the commandment of our Lord: "Love your enemies."

14. There is also agreement that the Christian Churches should demand that the use of force in international relations should be increasingly limited to the enforcement of international law. Both the Catholic and Protestant traditions distinguish between wars waged for a legitimate cause and wars waged for illegitimate reasons. St. Thomas considers that war is justifiable " when those who are attacked, have by their fault deserved to be attacked " (*ut scilicet illi qui impugnantur propter aliquam culpam, impugnationem mereantur*). Luther holds that we should distinguish between wars waged for the love of war, before one is attacked, and those which are forced upon one, because one is being attacked, and believes that the former are of the devil, while the latter are a burden which we must accept (*Denn man muss den Krieg scheiden, als dass etlicher aus Lust und Willen wird angefangen, ehe denn ein ander angreift, etlicher aber wird aus Not und Zwang aufgedrungen, nachdem er ist von eim andern angegriffen. Der erst ist des Teufels, dem gebe Gott kein Glück; der ander ist ein menschlich Unfall, dem helfe Gott.*) And Calvin considers war justifiable when it is in the nature of punishment against " armed robbers " (*brigands armés*). This distinction is important; but it is extremely difficult to apply it to the modern international situation, in which the difference between defence and attack becomes so easily blurred, and in which international law is still enforced by one of the conflicting parties itself. Our task is therefore to put new meaning into these classical formulae, that is, to find the objective criteria by which just wars may be distinguished from unjust wars.

15. The conception of legitimate defence is not enough by itself; for it is clear that in every future war the two parties will declare that they are engaged in defending their territory and their interests, and thus remain judges of their own cause. What is needed is an objective definition of aggression. The Churches need not necessarily wait until one such definition has been accepted by all governments, and might after careful consideration adopt a tentative definition for their own use. Such a definition should be considered not as a hard and fast rule, but as a help in deciding what legitimate defence concretely means, and whether in a particular case of international conflict the use of force is justifiable from the point of view of international justice.

16. The problem of international law is one of extreme difficulty, for we have as yet no generally-accepted body of international law which can solve the grave issues arising from the complex and dynamic relations between sovereign states. Moreover, the problem of law-enforcement on an international

scale seems for the present insoluble, since the formation of anything comparable with an international governing organ with powers analogous to those of a national government seems neither feasible nor desirable. In these circumstances, the Churches are called to work patiently for the strengthening of the very rudimentary elements of international order which are already in existence, and to create the international atmosphere in which further advance will become possible.

(b) The Church and Conscientious Objection

17. With regard to those members of the Churches who have become convinced that it is God's Will for them not to participate in military training and in war itself, the Churches should adopt the attitude that such members are entitled to their Christian convictions and should be free to express them, in so far as they base them on purely Christian grounds, and do not impose them on others as a law which is binding upon all Christians.

18. At the same time the Churches should work towards the introduction of adequate legislation concerning conscientious objection, so as to enable those who refuse military service for conscientious reasons to replace military service by non-militant service (cf. the laws already adopted in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Holland and Sweden).

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